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APPENDIX V.

REPORT
OF
Prof. GUSTAF KARSTEN, Secretary
OF THE
PHONETIC SECTION.

(PRESENTED AT THE CINCINNATI CONVENTION, 1888).

At the fifth annual meeting of the MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION, held at Philadelphia, December 29-30, 1887, it was resolved, on motion of Dr. BRIGHT (Johns Hopkins Univ.), that the Association recommend the formation of a Phonetic Section and suggest the names of A. M. BELL for President and G. KARSTEN for Secretary.* In accordance with this resolution the special Section was established, on the recommendation of a committee. Immediately after the Philadelphia meeting (1887), the undersigned entered into communication with Prof. BELL of Washington, and in an interview held later between the President and Secretary of the Phonetic Section, the following was agreed upon as representing the aims and character of this organization:—

The purpose of the Phonetic Section is to promote the study of Phonetics in this country; to develop, so far as circumstances will admit, the spirit for scientific phonetic research, and to put the instruction in Modern Languages, especially in our colleges, on a more scientific basis, by applying to practical language teaching the well established results of phonetic observation. This will be aimed at by establishing courses of lectures suitable to promulgate correct views on the subject, by arranging a system of exchanges in phonetic literature, and by giving to inquirers in phonetic matter such help, by correspondence, as may be feasible. In order to secure agreement as to the general mode of sound-notation, a committee will endeavor to select or formulate a standard system to be used by the Association. Equipped with this alphabet, young scholars over the country will be encouraged to record the various shadings of American speech, and to contribute to the study of dialect and speech mixture in this country. (Cf. MOD. LANG. NOTES, vol. iii, pp. 54-55, and *Phonetische Studien* i, 206).

*Cf. *Proceedings*, vol. iii, pages 9 and 45.

In this connection we take pleasure in calling attention to the fact that the investigation of American dialects, as hinted at in this programme, has meanwhile been made the object of a newly-formed society. Cf. MOD. LANG. NOTES iv, cols. 223-234.

The committee on sound-notation, together with another committee regulating the question of membership, formed the nucleus of the Phonetic Section. The following are the members of the two committees; *Committee on Sound-Notation*: The President and Secretary of the Section *ex-officio*: H. C. G. BRANDT (Hamilton College); JAMES W. BRIGHT (Johns Hopkins Univ.); HERMANN COLLITZ (Bryn Mawr Coll.); A. M. ELLIOTT (Johns Hopkins Univ.); E. S. SHELDON (Harvard Univ.).—*Committee on Membership*: The President and Secretary *ex-officio*; A. M. ELLIOTT (Johns Hopkins Univ.); J. J. STÜRZINGER (Bryn Mawr Coll.).—The annual fee is one dollar, to be placed at the disposal of the Secretary for the expenses of current correspondence and eventually for the purchase of phonetic literature.

With regard to the system of sound-notation, it should be stated that it is not, at present, a practical spelling reform that we are aiming at, but as exact a phonetic system as may be practicable for scientific purposes in general linguistic investigations, in dialect research, and in the treatment of historical phonetics. This system, however, should also be suited, in a simplified form, to the requirements of practical language teaching; still more simplified and reduced to what is absolutely necessary in every-day-life orthography, it would also form the natural basis of a common alphabet and pave the way to a systematical spelling reform. It is hoped that the various attempts which are now being made in this direction both by competent and incompetent men on this and the other side of the Atlantic, and which to a great extent are counteracting one another, may be united and come to final success.

We wish here to give due credit to the continued and enthusiastic efforts of Mr. M. M. CAMPBELL (Topeka, Kansas), who, by his various open letters to teachers, writers and readers, is trying to arouse public interest in an eminently public question that can be definitely settled only by the common consent of a people who have been educated to realize the usefulness of spelling reform.

Conscious of the fact that the great variety of phonetic systems now in existence greatly injures the legitimate progress of pure and applied phonetics, as well as the study of linguistics in general, the secretary was desirous to make at least an attempt to secure the co-operation and consent of all active phoneticians in Europe and America and so to find out what kind of a system would have the best chance of being universally adopted. With this aim in view, the following circular was issued:

The Phonetic Section of the MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA being now occupied with the arrangement of a standard system of scientific sound-notation, the following questions are brought before the Committee and before all those interested in the subject:

- Ia Should the standard system of sound-notation be a physiological one, the sign for each sound indicating as nearly as possible the position or movement of the organs of speech?
- IIa Or should at least a beginning be made in this direction by introducing some of the simplest and most suggestive physiological signs?
- IIIa Can we expect that authors, publishers and readers are prepared to adopt such a system at once?
 - Ib Would you prefer a system on the basis of the conventional alphabets of European languages?
 - IIb Should this system be founded on a combination of different alphabets or upon a single one with a liberal use of diacritic signs?
 - IIIb Should there be a common system for all languages, or a separate one for each of the principal groups?
- IV. Do you favor the adoption of one of the existing systems? If so, which do you prefer?
- V. Would you adopt this system without change, or, if not, with what modifications?
- VI. Or do you wish an entirely new system to be arranged?

I am happy to say that this enterprise has met everywhere with a very favorable reception. Many of our leading phonetists have been kind enough to send more or less extended answers to the questions herein propounded, and certainly the need of a standard system is generally recognized. On the other hand, there is already satisfactory evidence of the regrettable fact that the various scholars differ considerably, almost hopelessly, in their views; all the extremes are strongly represented, and it will be difficult to reach a final conclusion which will satisfy all. However this may be, we may hope to be able at the next meeting of the Association to give a fair representation of the opinion of the scientific world on a standard system of sound-notation.